

UNIT 2: PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Lesson 8

October 25, 2026

God Saves, Justifies, and Reconciles:

God saves and justifies those who put their faith in Christ.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson enriches our understanding of salvation by faith, emphasizing God's grace and justice. In Romans 3:21-31, Paul clarifies that righteousness is attained not through adherence to the Law but through faith in Jesus, revealing God's offer of salvation to all who believe in Him. Romans 5:1-5 reveals the blessings of justification, including peace with God, hope, and the guidance of the Spirit during trials. Verses 6-11 show the depth of God's love, demonstrated through Christ's sacrifice, promising reconciliation and eternal salvation. Collectively, these passages celebrate faith in Christ, delivering peace, enduring hope, and assurance of divine love.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In Romans, Paul emphasizes that righteousness by faith is central to Christian theology, rejecting the notion that it can be earned through adherence to the Law or human effort. Instead, righteousness is a divine gift, granted through faith in Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice. Paul asserts that all have sinned and fall short of God's glory, revealing the Law's inability to provide salvation. Through faith in Christ's redemptive work, both Jews and Gentiles are justified and reconciled to God, emphasizing the reach of His grace. By placing faith in Christ and trusting in God's promises, believers receive righteousness and a restored relationship with Him.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. SALVATION THROUGH FAITH: Romans 3:21-31.

- A. Righteousness Not Through Law, (21-24)
- B. God's Justice and Grace in Salvation, (25-31)

2. BENEFITS OF JUSTIFICATION: Romans 5:1-5.

- A. Peace with God, (1)
- B. Hope and Endurance Through the Spirit, (2-5)

3. GOD'S RECONCILING LOVE: Romans 5:6-11.

- A. God's Love Through Christ's Sacrifice, (6-8)
- B. Reconciliation and Assurance Through Christ, (9-11)

DISCUSSING THE LESSON

1. SALVATION THROUGH FAITH: Romans 3:21-31.

A. Righteousness Not Through Law, Romans 3:21-24.

The Apostles Paul's message in Romans 3, emphasizes a righteousness that challenged most Jews. He pointed to faith as the cornerstone of salvation, rather than adherence to the Mosaic Law. He began by asserting that righteousness from God has been revealed apart from the Law, a concept "witnesses by the law and the prophets" (v. 21). This reveals that right standing before God is not based on obedience to legal coded but is instead grounded in faith in Jesus Christ. Paul's argument dismantled the notion that human effort can achieve justification. The universality of sin and the insufficiency of the Law to remedy humanity's brokenness pointed to something better. By introducing "faith in Jesus Christ" as the means of receiving righteousness, Paul shifted the focus from human works to divine grace, emphasizing that salvation is offered freely to "all who believe" in Jesus Christ (v. 22 NKJV).

In verse 23, Paul emphasized the reach of this righteousness, stating that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." This universal human condition necessitated a universal solution, which Paul identified as "being justified ... by [God's] grace" (v. 24). The gift of righteousness is made possible "through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ," whose sacrifice bridged the gap between humanity and God. This passage challenges us to reframe our understanding of righteousness. It negates the idea that we can go down a checklist of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt nots" to gauge our righteousness. Paul's teaching invites a deeper reliance on God's grace and fosters humanity, reminding us that salvation is not the result of human merit but the effect of God's limitless love and mercy.

B. God's Justice and Grace in Salvation, Romans 3:25-31.

This passage reveals the profound balance between God's justice and grace in the work of salvation. Verse 25 highlights that God presented Christ as "a propitiation [appeasement] through faith in His blood." This act demonstrates God's justice in addressing sin, and He could not overlook or ignore humanity's transgressions, which are contrary to His nature. At the same time, it showcases His grace by providing a way for sinners to be justified, not through their own merit, but through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus. God's justice is upheld because sin is punished, yet His grace shines as He offers redemption freely to all who believe. This passage powerfully teaches that salvation is entirely the work of God, rooted in His righteousness and extended through His mercy.

Considering humanity's inability to merit righteousness, "boasting ... is excluded" (v. 27) because salvation is not achieved through human works of adherence to the Law, but rather by faith alone. This truth dismantles any notion of self-righteousness and highlights the inclusivity of God's plan, which extends salvation to all people. Paul asserted that "the God of the Jews" is the God "of the Gentiles also" (v. 29). God's justice ensures that He remains impartial, treating all people equally under the Law, while His grace makes salvation accessible to everyone who places their faith in Christ. Faith does not "make void" or nullify the Law (v. 31) but upholds it

because Christ fulfilled its demands perfectly. Together, these verses illustrate how God's justice and grace work in harmony revealing His character as perfectly holy and infinitely loving.

Righteousness cannot be earned by our own effort; it is gifted through faith in God's grace. Grace, which is His unmerited favor, was displayed in the sacrificial death of Jesus for our sins. Through grace, we are enabled to walk in obedience to the Word and the will of God. As such, there is no place for arrogance or boasting by us as Christ's followers. Instead, we should be the humblest. As Paul wrote to Titus, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (3:5).

2. BENEFITS OF JUSTIFICATION: Romans 5:1-5.

A. Peace with God, Romans 5:1.

"Therefore" in Romans 5:1 points back to the statement about Jesus Christ in 4:25: "he was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God" (NLT). Because of Christ's death and resurrection, we are "justified by faith" in Him (5:1). This establishes the precondition for what follows: "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Apart from justification by faith, we do not and cannot experience peace with God. There is no work, no ritual, and no religious practices that provide peace with God. It is only in the place of complete surrender, where faith unconditionally receives God's grace, that we can truly find peace with God. This incredible peace "passes all understanding" and keeps our "hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

Romans 5:1 presents the profound theological truth that justification by faith brings reconciliation between humanity and God. In the context of Paul's Letter to the Romans, justification is not earned through works or merit but is a gift of grace received through faith in Jesus Christ. The peace He then gives is not merely an emotional state or absence of conflict but a restored relationship with God, who was previously estranged from humanity and the beginning of communion with the Creator, rooted in the redemptive work of Christ. Humanity was created for fellowship with God, and apart from that fellowship, there can be no peace, but only guilt, shame, and condemnation.

Peace with God is foundational to the Christian life. It assures us that we are no longer under condemnation but are welcomed into fellowship with God as His children. This peace is enduring and unshaken by external circumstances because it is grounded in the perfect finished work of Christ rather than imperfect human effort. It also serves as the basis for spiritual growth, enabling us to approach God with confidence and gratitude. Furthermore, this peace transforms relationships with others, calling us to live in harmony and extend grace, mirroring the reconciliation we have received. Ultimately, peace with God is both a present reality and foretaste of the eternal communion we are promised to have with Him.

B. Hope and Endurance Through the Spirit, Romans 5:2-5.

These three verses beautifully illustrate the profound connection between justification and the hope that sustains believers through trials. We are granted "access by faith into this grace

wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (v. 2). Grace is a gift that leads to and flows from our justification through Christ. This grace is not static; it is a dynamic force that enables us to rejoice in the hope of God’s glory. The hope mentioned here is not wishful thinking, but a confident expectation rooted in God’s promises. This hope is cultivated through the Spirit, empowering us to endure life’s challenges with unwavering trust in God’s plan. Justification assures us of our reconciliation with God, and this assurance becomes the foundation on which hope is built, allowing us to face adversity with courage and conviction.

“And not only that ... tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance character; and character, hope” (vv. 3-4 NKJV). Trials are not meaningless; they serve as opportunities for spiritual growth. The Spirit enables us to endure hardships, shaping our character to reflect Christ more fully. As our character matures, our hope becomes more steadfast because it is anchored in God’s love, which is “poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (v. 5 NKJV). God’s love reassures us that we are not abandoned in our struggles but are being prepared for the eternal glory promised by God. Thus, justification not only secures our standing before God but also equips us with a Spirit-empowered hope that sustains and strengthens us through all circumstances.

Justification by faith transforms our identity, struggles, and relationships. Through faith in Christ, we are reconciled with God, embraced as His children, and freed from condemnation. This provides peace anchored in grace, giving us confidence in our challenges and inspiring us to be gracious with others. Paul taught that faith builds resilience, hope, and trust in God’s promises as our character is refined through trials. God’s love and peace can sustain us through every season.

3. GOD’S RECONCILING LOVE: Romans 5:6-8.

A. God’s Love Through Christ’s Sacrifice, Romans 5:6-8.

These verses profoundly illustrate the depth of God’s love through the sacrificial work of Christ. While humanity was powerless and entrenched in sin, “Christ died for the ungodly” (v. 6). This unconditional love defied human logic, as it is rare for someone to willingly die even for a righteous person (v. 7). Yet, God’s love transcended such limitations, as He offered His Son to die for sinners who were estranged from Him. This sacrificial act is based solely on God’s unwavering commitment to redeem all who put their faith in Him. It is a testament to a love that seeks reconciliation even though humanity had nothing to offer in return.

Verse 8 emphasizes that God’s love is proactive and unchanging: “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” God took the initiative in restoring broken relationships, showing that His love is not contingent on human effort or righteousness. Instead, His love is rooted in His character. Through Christ’s sacrifice, God bridged the gap between His holiness and our sinfulness, offering peace and reconciliation if we will believe in Him. God’s desire is not condemnation but restoration, inviting us into a renewed relationship with Him through the redemptive work of His Son.

B. Reconciliation and Assurance Through Christ, Romans 5:9-11.

By putting our faith in Christ, we are “justified by His blood” and “shall be saved from [divine] wrath” (v. 9). This justification is not merely a legal declaration but a life-changing act of grace when we receive God’s forgiveness and mercy. It speaks to God’s immense love, which sought reconciliation even when humanity was entrenched in sin. The death of Christ was the ultimate expression of this love, securing peace between God and man.

Reconciliation with God is not a fleeting act, but a permanent reality grounded in the resurrection of Christ. If God reconciled us while we were enemies through the death of His Son, how much more will we “be saved by His life” (v. 10). This assurance causes joy and confidence, as we can now rejoice in God through Jesus Christ (v. 11). As we reflect on the depth of God’s love, we should respond with gratitude and trust. Reconciliation through Christ is not only about salvation from wrath but also about living in the fulness of fellowship with God. It assures us that our hope is secure and that God’s love will sustain us eternally.

God’s love reached us at our lowest, offering reconciliation and restoration. Christ sacrificed Himself for us not because we deserved it, but out of unwavering, proactive grace that bridges our brokenness with God’s holiness.

God’s unfailing love for us is an objective fact affirmed over and over in the Scriptures. It is true whether we believe it or not. Our doubts do not destroy God’s love, nor does our faith create it. It originates in the very nature of God, who is love, and it flows to us through our union with His beloved Son. – Jerry Bridges.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus called the disciples to follow Him, though they had done nothing to merit the call. We are not called because we are good, but His grace makes us righteous as we walk by faith in His love.

MINISTRY IN ACTION

As recipients of God’s grace, the church is called to be agents of grace. We are commissioned to take the Gospel to the world, inviting others to follow Jesus and walk in His saving grace.

Regarding Paul's Letter to the Romans

Paul's Letter to the Romans is "the longest of Saint Paul's Epistles and most systematic theologically ... Romans has always been recognized as a primary contribution to Christian theology....It is quoted or alluded to by the Fathers from Saint Clement or Rome [AD 96] onwards...From Origen [AD 185-254] onwards it has been the subject of many commentaries ... and has profoundly affected the Christian outlook on such questions as original sin, merit, and justification" (The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church).

There was a great theological reason for the writing of Paul's Letter to the Romans, a problem that had demanded the Letter of the Galatians at an earlier time in Paul's ministry. It concerned the relation of the Old Testament Scriptures and Pharisaic Judaism to the Gospel implemented by the earthly work of Christ (see Galatians 2:1-9, 16; Acts 15:1-5, 22-29). "It has been said that if Galatians is the 'Magna Charta' of the Gospel, Romans is the 'Constitution'" (The International Dictionary of the Bible).

"Romans is a work of profound theological reflection. As such, it has probably influenced Christian thinking and history more than any other epistle of Paul. It is his longest letter and, in the eyes of many, his most mature. Indeed, Paul had been preaching and defending the gospel for two decades before he wrote Romans, leaving us a work that is stamped with the imprint of his wisdom, depth, and spiritual energy...The body of Romans divides neatly into three major parts. (1) Salvation in Christ (1:16-8:39); (2) Restoration of Israel (9:1-11:39); (3) Christian Living and Epilogue (12:1-16:23)" (The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible).

Paul's Letter to the Romans "is a striking combination of the doctrinal and the practical. Saint Paul was a theologian. The character of God – the subject of theology – was a favorite theme with him. But he thought of the character of God in relation to human life. It is true that the great doctrine of the epistles is justification by faith ... It is a doctrine which, as the preaching of it at the Reformation, and since, has shown, has a profound influence on human life. Hence, if the theme of the earlier chapters (1-5) is justification, that of the latter chapters (6-8; 12-16) is sanctification" (Irwin's Bible Commentary).

WORKSHEET

Looking to God

Complete the progression to show why Christians can “glory in tribulation” (Romans 5:3-4):

T _____ P _____ C _____

- **How has tribulation produced perseverance in your life?**

Helen Keller said, “Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened... and success achieved.”

- **How has perseverance helped to shape your character?**
- **What does hope not do, and why not (v. 5)?**

Write three words (from vv. 9-11) telling what God did for us.

- 1.**
- 2.**
- 3.**